



May 5, 1991

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# Flash, TV's \$1.6m man

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# THE

BELOW: John Wesley Shipp and Amanda Pays star in *The Flash*

# FLASH

## Hi-tech hero

**J**OHN Wesley Shipp admits he had more than a few doubts when he first heard about the starring role in the new, hi-tech adventure series, *The Flash*, which premieres on Channel Nine this week.

A former Emmy-winning star of *Guiding Light* and *As The World Turns*, and a graduate of Broadway, Shipp was worried the show would be all style, no substance.

"When I first heard about it, I said, 'no thanks'," he said. "I thought I'd just be running around in a pair of red tights week after week, saving people."

"But I'm terrified of wasted possibilities, and they (the producers) are taking the character of Barry Allen, Flash's alter ego, very seriously, so there is something in it for me as an actor."

"They had a real character in mind. He's everyman, not a superhero."

After auditioning more than 60 other actors for the 50-year-old DC comics character, producers Danny Bilson and Paul DeMeo knew they had found their Flash.

And Shipp, buoyed by their commitment, realised the role suited him more than he originally believed.

"It has a fantasy element, but we also try to deal with social issues," he explained. "We've done shows about drug addiction and the homeless."

Shipp, 34, also likes the fact that his character has 'neuroses'. "He has questions about his power, his motivations," he said. "One of the things I liked is that when Barry gets the super powers, his first reaction isn't, 'okay, I'm going to save the world'."

"He decides to use the powers after his policeman brother is killed. But I don't want *The Flash* to become a vigilante. I don't want him to abuse the power. I'm after the writers to explore its effects on Barry."

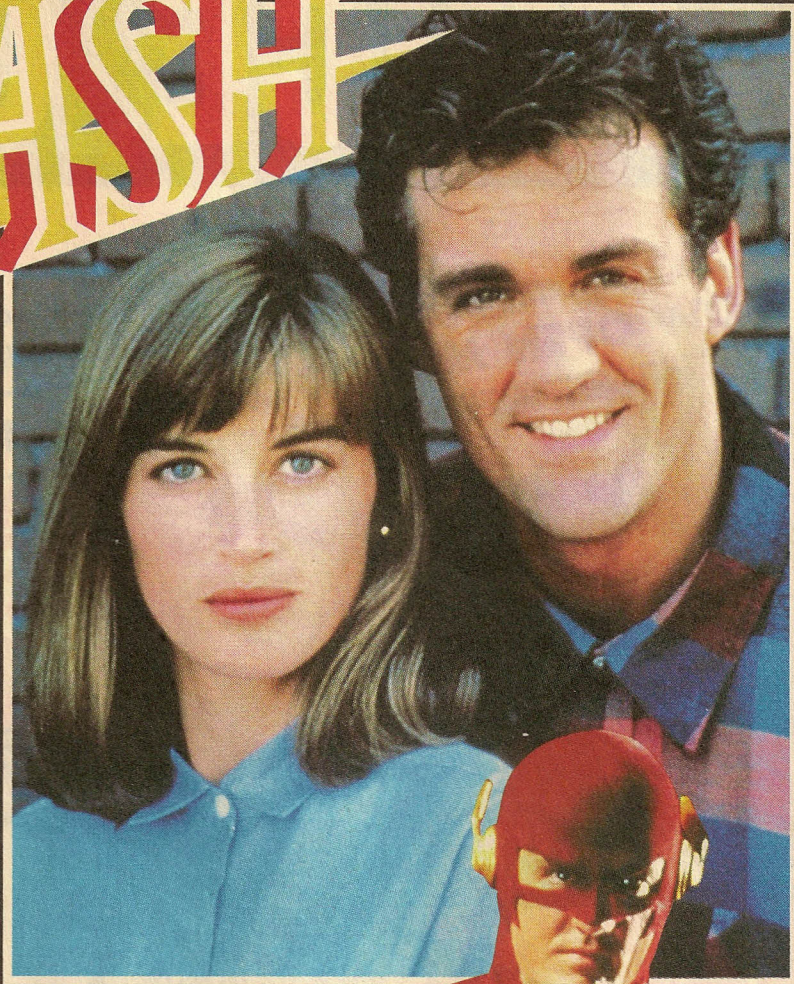
Still, Shipp knows many viewers tune in mainly for the amazing special effects, which helps bump the weekly costs for each episode to \$1.6 million – the most expensive on television.

And what effects they are. Even the suit is a marvel of technology. It's a \$25,000 masterpiece with its sculptured, foam-latex muscles, and comes in 30 pieces.

But it's so hot, it's equipped with a cooling system.

Once he dons the suit, Shipp says, "it's all special effects". I'll come in and say a line here and there, but they keep it to a minimum," he said.

● The pilot movie of *The Flash* debuts on Nine and WIN this Monday at 8.30pm, followed by the first in the series on Thursdays at 9.30pm.





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